

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

New program plays name game

Dreaming up a good name for a new product or company isn't a task to be taken lightly. The ultimate success of new ventures often rides on the name chosen.

In fact, the task is so important that a whole industry of "naming consultants" and specialized advertising agencies has sprung up to help businesses name new products. They're used mainly by large companies with large budgets. But now, one of the consulting firms is offering its techniques to large and small companies as part of a computer program that runs on IBM PCs and PC-compatible computers.

Called "Namer," the program is designed to serve as your in-house consultant. It's available for \$99 from Salinon Corp. of Dallas.

Be forewarned, however — it's complicated and not easy to learn and use. Namer is actually com-

posed of 11 subprograms that are operated independently of each other. Here are the key parts:

✓ Original Name Generator. This part simply throws out random sequences of letters making up names between three and eight characters long, according to a

basic set of semantic rules. If you like a sequence that you see as it pops up on the screen, you press a key to save it for further consideration. You can speed up or slow down the rate at which it generates letter combinations. The results are bizarre, mainly because the names being generated bear no rela-

tionship to the product or service you're trying to name. I found this part of the program to be a waste of time.

✓ Connotation Synthesizer. Instead of picking random letters, this part of the program allows you to select from a data base of name

parts that relate to particular industries or fields of interest. The program displays the name parts in various orders and combinations. As before, if you like a particular combination that you see, you can press a key to save it for further consideration, but this time your chances are much better that you'll find some that you'll like. For example, if you want to build a name that connotes both "high tech" and "knowledgeable," it will search its data base and suggest dozens of alternatives. "Intelicon" might be the result.

✓ Phrase Maker. Working in a similar fashion to the connotation synthesizer, the phrase maker uses whole words instead of word parts to help you form distinctive phrases. For example, if you want to build a three-word phrase or name starting with a synonym for "advanced," followed by a synonym for "athletic," and ending with a synonym for "store," it might throw out hundreds of alternatives, and you might end up with "Modern Sports Boutique."

I found Namer to be much more complicated than I expected. And, if you buy it with a pressing naming problem in mind, you'll probably end up frustrated after several hours of trying to learn and use the program — and no closer to finding that elusive winning name than before. Maybe, as I did, you'll simply appreciate the talent and skill of consultants more.

But don't give up — I found that a 16-page booklet that came with Namer was actually almost as helpful as the program itself. It provides enough information to do a lot of the creative work without the program. And it's not complicated at all. The best part is that the company says they'll send you the booklet, free, simply for the asking. Just call Salinon Corp. at (800) 722-0054.

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